

Bringing it Home: How the homespace can affect women's identity in cases of domestic violence

Although a source of contention within feminist theory, there exists a relationship between women and the idea of 'home'. Gendered space is nothing new, but this paper will argue that there is a 'feminine' quality to private space that goes beyond passivity and any existing sexist notions of domesticity. Considering the problem of domestic violence in particular, this paper will propose that there is significant value in recognising the potential of an interactive and restorative union between female identity and the homespace.

If we are to accept the ways in which bodies, comportment, and violence are inherently gendered, then we must do the same with material space when examining cases of domestic violence. After all, the kind of abuse and control that is wielded in the home is often characterised, and indeed *enabled*, by its setting. As well as the cultural, economic, and social structures that influence how violence is both enacted and experienced, there are spatial ones, too. With that in mind, this paper will take a phenomenological approach to examine what happens when the notion of 'the domestic' is co-opted by perpetrators of abuse, how violence frequently disorients women and displaces their identities in the home, and why it matters.

This paper hopes to demonstrate that acknowledging a victim's embodied experience of their immediate environment will not only lead us to a greater understanding of what it means to live in a violent home, but why this kind of crime continues to be such a pervasive problem behind closed doors.

Domestic violence; private space; feminism

Rianne Houghton

Postgraduate Researcher, School of Social Policy | University of Birmingham | RSH865@student.bham.ac.uk

Rianne is a first-year PhD student in the School of Social Policy. Taking place across the departments for Social Work and Social Care and Social Policy, Sociology and Criminology, Rianne's research interrogates the relationship between private space and domestic violence. Before starting her PhD, Rianne completed an MA in Gender, Media and Culture at Goldsmiths, University of London, and a BA in English Literature at Queen Mary. Her interests include feminist phenomenology, spatial relationships, and drinking beer.